

Today, the Bureau of Labor Statistics issued state and regional unemployment data for the month of September. The good news is that Nebraska's state unemployment fell from five percent to 4.9 percent last month. However, an analysis of the unemployment trends in several of our neighboring states shows that while our unemployment may currently be low, the economic situation is still very delicate.

In February of this year (before the passage of Washington's stimulus spending bill), Nebraska's state unemployment was at 4.2 percent. Since then, we have seen a 14 percent rise in unemployment—which is comparatively low to what our neighbors in Iowa and Wyoming experienced.

Wyoming's unemployment figures were just slightly lower than Nebraska's in February, at 3.9 percent. However, since then Wyoming experienced a significant 74.4 percent increase in unemployment, and 6.8 percent of the state is now unemployed. Iowa's unemployment figures in February were also close to ours, at 4.9 percent. 6.7 percent of Iowans are now unemployed, however, which is a 36.7 percent increase.

These trends should give us pause to consider that while Nebraska is fortunately not experiencing the severity of the economic downturns in other states at this time due to our strong agricultural economy and economic diversity, we are not immune.